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Marginalized Women in the plays of Mahesh Dattani

In modern India, the present form of drama can be defined as a mixed form of ancient Indian dramatic features with Western theatre. Colonization paved way for the growth of Indian drama. There are various forms of drama and Theatre form is one among them. The puppet drama is performed in streets. The form of theatre at present time has derived various changes. The British theatre was formed in Bengal in 1757. Calcutta theatre was formed based on Western model. The leading members of Calcutta society were the patrons of the theatre. Schools and colleges were the suitable places where plays written by Shakespeare were enacted. After the downfall of Sanskrit theatre around A.D.1000, there was no other notable theatre activity. British patronage encouraged the theatrical activities. But the feelings

and sentiments of the people could not flourish in drama. There was a fear their feelings might convert them against British rulers.

Gender discrimination is one of the prominent themes in Indian writing in English. Usually people think that women are inferior to man. It is interesting to note that women are subject to be tortured in male dominated society. In the patriarchal system, women are treated as flower vase or a bird caught in the cage. It is believed that women are believed that women must serve to men. If both man and woman are treated equal, there will be no problem. In ancient books and scriptures, sometimes women have been praised. In *Manusmriti*, the Indian saint, Manu where there is worship of woman, there god dwells. In the society, woman's life is a challenge. She is subjected to face so many hurdles and difficulties. By the recent medical world, if people find the female child in the womb, it is destroyed.

A woman is assigned a lower position in the social set up. The functions and duties of woman are inferior in male oriented society. She is obliged to subordinate her interests and desires to the male members. All male – members try to possess them and they cannot even to tolerate even a slight deviation in women's part. *Tara* is a problem play which articulates the theme of gender politics. A girl child in a family is victimized to death. It shows how women have been the subject of persecutions and suffering right from the birth to death. The play was first performed as "Twinkle Tara" at Chowdiah Memorial Hall, Bangalore on the 23rd of October 1990 by Playpen performing Arts Group. Mahesh Dattani himself directed the play at first time. It is a stage play in two Acts.

Even the names of the rivers are given women's name like Ganga, Yamuna, Gothavari. We call the language which we speak as mother tongue and the country we live is called mother land. It is the matter of great fact is that we give supreme position to women. But the

time the immemorial women are not expected to give equal position to them. The ideal wife – Sita and Savitri are expected to live and satisfy the needs of their counterparts. The women have the constant pressure of living is slight change in women's position. They have to satisfy the male's expectations. This is what Mahesh Dattani shows through his play 'Tara' though we are living in the world of democracy; the half of the women cannot get equal rights from their counterparts. They are assigned to live a life which has been reduced them to a position of inferior to men. The average women live a life which is not better than a slave. At all the stages of life, right from the birth to death, women are living in a subordinate position to men. When she is young, she has to live under the control of her father. After getting married, she is living under the control of her husband. When she becomes aged, she is in the control of her sons. Thus each and every part of her life, She is controlled to live in the life of her male dominated world. Though the men are both of women's wombs, they are dominated by the men's ideologies and activities, the women are considered to live subordinate to men. In realities she has been enslaved, degraded and subjected to various types of atrocities and tyrannies in the hand of men and the male dominated society. The gift of democracy has not been fully presented to women. Education has not reached fully to women. In parliament the utmost system of democracy, they could not get equal number of members. The sense of her dedication and devotion make a full fledged man. Readiness to submit to the bitterest trails and tribulations has always been a source of inspiration to the whole humanity. But she is considered to live only secondary part to the whole man's world. It is a common proverb that "behind all great achievements of men, there has been an unmistakable contribution of women". But all the places her devotion, sincerity and dedication in the position of daughter, wife and mother meet disorientation of society. She faces all the miseries of the society. The authors of novels, prose, poetry and drama raise their problems to the society by their writings.

Dattani chooses to direct the first edition of his plays to whom he writes. He wrote *Tara* in 1990 suggests that the play revolves around the girl Tara, the playwright observes the society and expresses the gender politics through the play. He writes in the preface of his book "Collected plays", writes: "I also know that I have a lot to say and am probably not saying it well enough. But my characters have a lot to say too, and they seem to be doing rather well at having their say. (VI)"

Dan is living in London. He recollects and remembers the story of his childhood. He is a Siamese twin. His third leg is joined with her sister Tara who is very intelligent, attractive and talkative. Their parents prefer Chandan who is later known as Dan. They plan to separate their children and so they visit the doctor. They come to know the fact that the third leg suits Tara. Bharati is Tara's mother. Patel is Tara's father both like Chandan. Bharati's father is a big politician who influences and persuades Dr. Thakkar for the operation. The doctor does the operation for the sake of money. After two days the leg is separated. After some time, Bharati is ready to amend her mistake by giving her kidney to Tara because Tara's kidney is damaged. Patel does not give permission for this act. He beats his wife, but she gives. At last Tara meets death. Dan expresses his experiences as he completes the play in the name of "Twinkle Tara". He continues his life with guilt feelings because of his parents shameful act. He makes an apology for that act.

Dattani is the writer who shows the problem of society. He does not like to set a trend in it. He takes this subject from a middle class family. The girl, Tara suffers physically and psychologically. She is not productive for the growth of a family. He takes the theme of gender politics which the society does not like to discuss about it. The mother of twins select male child instead of female child. There is a condition by which the operation should be

done. It means death of one child. Their mother prefers the male child to the female child. So the male child is in the position of the female child. It makes the play very interesting.

Tara is a talkative girl. When Roopa comes at her home and teases Chandan, he cannot protect himself. But Tara teaches her lesson indirectly. Tara thinks that Roopa may humiliate her at that time she says indirectly “So how does it feel having one tit smaller than the other?” (Dattani II-369) Roopa is scanned and comes under the very sarcastic situation. She criticizes Tara’s mother and escapes from the place. Bharati knows very well that Tara is cute and comfortable girl in many situations. Though she knows Tara’s intelligence, She is so supportive to Chandan. Bharati says: “Yes, .Chandan the world will tolerate you the world will accept you but not her! oh the pain she is going to feel when she sees herself at eighteen or twenty. Thirty is unthinkable. and what about forty and fifty! Oh God!” (Dattani I – 349)

Dattani expresses the society’s nature about female gender through the patel community. Marriage system oppresses of female child. In Indian culture, when there is a marriage the parents of her brides have to give large amount of money and jewels as dowry. It is discussed in the play through the dialogue.

ROOPA. Since you insist, I will tell .you. It may not be true. But this is what I have heard. The patels in the old days were unhappy with getting girl babies- You know dowry and things like that-so they used to drown them in milk
pause.

TARA. In milk?

ROOPA. So when people asked about how the baby died, they could say that she
choked while .drinking when milk. (Dattani I-349)

Dattani elaborately explains gender issue in the base of relationship. He discusses, in the play, the wife and husband relationship. Parents and children relationship, son-in-law and

father-in-law relationship, doctor and patient relationship and brother and sister relationship. This kind of empathetic situation rules in India because of patriarchal system. Though Indian culture is one of the ancient cultures of the world, people cannot tolerate the cruelty towards female children. India has not been able to progress on the sociological side. Tara gets secondary position in the Indian tradition. So tradition and patriarchal system fail to accept female. The society forgets the truth that man comes from woman. The female may be mother, daughter, sister or wife. But the society treats her as secondary one. The playwright slightly satirizes the Indian marriage system which is the main root cause for suppression of female world. The society is made up of man and woman. Man symbolizes vigour where woman symbolizes affection. If one is absent, another is not fulfilled.

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